

Indian Opinion

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THE DAY OF PRAYER OBSERVED THROUGHOUT THE PROVINCE

LAST Tuesday was observed as a day of humiliation and prayer by the Indian community against the unjust action of the Union Government in introducing the Asiatic Bill.

All businesses in Indian quarters were closed for the day and prayer meetings were held throughout the Province and other parts of the Union. Durban town presented historic scenes on the public streets where thousands of Indians marched in a procession from Victoria Street to the Town Hall via Gardiner Street.

The crowd kept marvellously quiet and not one untoward scene occurred. Apart from the Indian volunteers the Borough Police had also rendered great assistance in keeping order.

The Town Hall was packed to its utmost at 10-30 a.m. and the meeting commenced at nearly 11 o'clock with a very impressive prayer by the Muslim high priest Molvi Fateh Mahomed.

The acting Secretary Mr. P. R. Pather read many of the messages received by the Natal Indian Congress wishing them every success from throughout the Union and India. We give some of the noteworthy messages below:—

Messages

MAHATMA GANDHI

"God grant success."

THE REV. C. F. ANDREWS

"Our trust is in God not in Man. We believe God ever helps the oppressed and will give us strength accordingly to our need. In God's strength we shall succeed for God's strength is made perfect in human weakness."

THE RT. REV. ARCHDEACON HODSON

"You have my sincerest sympathy. God will grant your prayer."

REV. P. LAMULA—CHAIRMAN NATAL NATIVE CONGRESS, DURBAN BRANCH

"I wish you all God's Blessings. . . . This is the time when all the coloured races should combine to defend their rights. . . . We must sink or swim together. . . . There is a nervous lion which is stealthily creeping to jump upon his pray. The Indians who were brought in this country to develop it by planting sugar cane are threatened with the Asiatic Bill. The Natives, who have developed European civilisation through their sweat, are threatened with segregation in the land of their birth and forefathers. The Coloureds, who are the offsprings of our sisters, have been promised to receive an unhatched egg, which, in fact, might be rotten or full of poison. . . . We should combine and try to organise our people."

THE REV. FATHER MAINGOT

"Both Rev. Father Tanguy and myself approve of the steps taken by your Congress, by offering prayers to the Almighty to instil absolute justice and fair play towards the unprotected people of the Union. We are holding a service in our Church, when we will offer prayers and ask God to guide and assist such members of Parliament as are responsible for the disgraceful Asiatic Bill and beg of Him that the House that represents the country may do what is right and just."

THE REV. A. LAMONT

"I hope and pray that to-day's great meeting of the Indian community may eventuate in a peaceful and equitable solution to your difficulties as British subjects of the Indian Empire in South Africa."

THE REV. J. METCALF

". . . May you have the guidance you seek and the success you deserve."

CANON A. J. S. HARKER

". . . . I shall pray that it may be made clear to all of us, to Government and governed, to Europeans and Asiatics, what is God's will in regard to the treatment of Asiatics in South Africa, and that we may all be strong to follow that will."

Chairman's Speech

Mr. V. Lawrence who presided over the meeting said, it was just in the nature of things that they should proclaim that day as a devotional day for prayer and for invoking the blessings of the Almighty, because a turning point in the history of their community had been reached, and their existence in this land as a self-respecting unit could be secured by the unseen influence of the Creator alone.

THE SELECT COMMITTEE

In referring the Bill to the Select Committee of the House consequent on the rejection of the terms of settlement laid down by the Government of India, the speaker went on to say, the Minister said that there was no divergence of opinion in respect of the Asiatic Bill among members of Parliament, and yet, he expected a peaceful atmosphere for the solution of the problem by a Committee, the majority of whom were avowed anti-Asiatics. However, they had not the slightest hesitation in placing their case before any anti-Asiatic body since their case stood on the solid rock of right, justice and truthfulness. But then, it was really difficult to follow the trend of reasoning of the Minister of the Interior when he said by one breath that he would not allow outside interference in the internal affairs of South Africa, and by the next turn of the tongue he said he would not allow any other than the deputation from the Government of India to tender evidence before the Select Committee.

Indeed, Dr. Malan had apparently forgotten in his anxiety to defend his position the third party, that was, the existence of the South African Indian community, whose fate had been the subject of all this controversy.

He was not there to discuss the propriety or otherwise of the Government of India accepting the conditions on which they had elected to tender evidence before the Select Committee, but what he wished to maintain was, whether they who were in this country, who were subjects of this Union, they who had every right to know how their destiny was disposed of, were not entitled to be consulted before the respective Governments arrived at a decision.

DOMINION STATUS

Dr. Malan maintained that he would not allow outside interference in the internal affairs of this country; but the Indian community maintained that

the grant of Dominion status to South Africa did not imply the right on the part of the white population of this country of oppression, spoliation, and disintegration of unrepresented subjects of the Union. Moreover, the present move on the part of the Union Government having for its object the deprivation of the right of existence of their countrymen in this country, was a question of far-reaching international importance, and therefore they maintained that the Indian community could not allow the question to be disposed of in a haphazard manner.

Since Dr. Malan said that the present move was to be a final solution of the Indian question, he (Mr. Lawrence) ventured to say it was not so, in fact there had been attempts at a settlement more than once, and it was announced that each settlement was final, but that was followed by a fresh agitation for the deprivation of the existing rights of the Indians, with the result that there had never been a finality to the settlements.

GENERAL SMUTS' ATTITUDE

The speaker dealt at length with the British Government's attitude in 1910, quoting Lord Crewe's dispatch to General Botha in October of that year.

He continued, that it would be plain from the assurances given by General Botha, the then Prime Minister, that the passing of the Immigrants' Regulation Act was to be a final ending of the Indian question, and that it was understood that the resident Indian population would be permitted to pursue their occupation unmolested, and this understanding and first final settlement of the controversy was reconfirmed in a speech which General Smuts delivered at the Imperial Conference in 1917. In that speech General Smuts said: "In South Africa, there has been this fundamental trouble that the white community has been afraid to open the door too wide to Indian immigration. Luckily we have got over these difficulties. I have always felt sure that once the white community in South Africa were rid of the fear, that they were going to be flattered by unlimited immigration from India, all the other questions will be considered subsidiary and would become easily and perfectly soluble. Here, if any question proves difficult of treatment, we can discuss it in a friendly way and try to find in consultation a solution."

Such was the solemn and irrevocable undertakings given by General Botha and General Smuts as to the final nature of the first settlement soon after the passing of the Immigrants' Regulation Act. Had the Government of this country kept faith to that undertaking? No. The spirit as well as the letter of the undertaking was subsequently violated, and hence the Indians had had to have recourse to passive resistance which resulted in the famous settlement of 1914. The purport of this settlement was that the Government undertook to administer the existing laws in a just manner with due regard to vested rights. General Smuts emphasised that it was directly understood that the placing of the Indians' Relief Act on the Statute-Book of the Union coupled with the fulfilment of the assurances, would constitute a complete and final settlement of the controversy which had unfortunately existed for so long and would be unreservedly accepted as such by the Indian community.

PROTECTION OF VESTED RIGHTS

It should be obvious to any unprejudiced person that the Gandhi-Smuts settlement, which was the result of a protracted struggle extending for over seven years, and which reached finality in 1914, when read in conjunction with the dispatch of General Botha and the speech of General Smuts at the Imperial Conference was a convincing proof of the solution of all outstanding difficulties between the Union and the Indian community. But that was not to be, in fact, although they accepted and

abided by their undertaking in terms of that settlement, the Government never did, and never meant it as such. Before the ink was dry on that sacred document, another agitation was set on foot in Natal under the plea of low standard of living and the economic habits of the life of the Indian, the result of this agitation being that the Provincial Council on this occasion appeared as a medium to filch away the long enjoyed rights of the Indian commercial community and more than one Ordinance was passed in that direction and assented to by the Governor-General-in-Council, despite the undertaking given in terms of the 1914 settlement as regards the protection of vested rights.

The unceasing "settlements" on the part of the Government indicated no sign of sanctity for their pledged word or signed documents, and despite the hue and cry that might be raised against them on some real or imaginary grounds or other, the cold fact remained that this Government as a Government in the real sense of the word attached very little importance to their sense of duty towards subjects who had no voice in the Government of the country. Should the Government and Parliament of the Union attach any value to their past undertaking to the Imperial Government, then they would not have so lightly given their approval to various Ordinances passed by the Natal and the Transvaal Provincial Councils, such as the Boroughs Ordinance, Land Alienation Ordinance, Rural Licensing Ordinance, Townships Ordinance, and so forth, all having for its objects the oppression of the Indians, and deprivation of their existing rights. They would observe that by these various Ordinances Natal was given a free hand to cripple the Indian community, the result of which they realised to-day in the once flourishing and prosperous commercial community now on the brink of ruin. In the Transvaal a similar state of affairs existed.

ORGANISED AGITATION

Not contented with the ruin of their commerce an organised agitation had been going on evidently with a view of ruining the Indian working men and the industrial class of Indians. A large number of men working for years in the Railway Department have been displaced, and by a circuitous operation of the Industrial Conciliation Act, a state of affairs was being created which would render the employing of an Indian an offence and in practice Indian-owned industries would be forced to close business.

In conclusion, Mr. Lawrence said they prayed that God would grant their members strength and wisdom to defend the weak, but not to oppress them.

Mr. P. S. Aiyar then moved the following resolution:—

"This mass meeting prays Almighty God to protect the South African Indian community in this hour of greatest danger, and prays that he may move the hearts of the rulers of this country to sympathy and justice."

This was seconded by Mr. J. Royoppen and carried.

Other speakers included Messrs. I. I. Richards, Kimberly, A. I. Kajee, T. M. Naicker, T. C. Moodley and M. Beethasee.

The Chairman expressed thanks to a number of Europeans for attending the meeting.

After the proceedings had terminated the whole audience once more formed into a procession and went through Smith Street and then through Grey Street to Victoria Street where they assembled at Rawat's Hall and further speeches were made the whole affair terminating at 1-30 p.m.

East London Resolutions

East London, Feb. 23 (Renter).—In compliance with the appeal of the South African Indian Congress, to-day was observed as a day of prayer by the

local Indian community, and all their places of business were closed as a mark of silent protest against the "iniquitous and unjust Asiatic Bill" and other laws which differentially affect the Indian community. A mass meeting, over which Mr. S. Cassoojee, the local president, presided, passed the following resolutions, of course unanimously:—

1. "That this mass meeting of East London Indians, assembled at No. 8, Amalinda Road, under the auspices of the British Indian Association, whole-heartedly supports the South African Indian Congress and prays that your efforts may meet with every success."

2. "That this mass meeting of loyal British Indian subjects call upon the universal God of all humanity to protect the just interests of the community of this country in this, their greatest hour of trial. We sincerely and devoutly appeal to that Supreme Being, the Father of us all, to move the hearts of South Africa's rulers to humanity, sympathy and justice when deciding our fate."

Rand Demonstration

Johannesburg, Feb. 23 (Reuter). A large percentage of the Indian community of Johannesburg responded to the appeal of the British Indian Association to make to-day a day of intercession and prayer as a mark of protest against the Asiatic Bill and other laws affecting Indians which are now before the Union Parliament.

That portion of Johannesburg mainly occupied by Indian traders presented a desolate appearance with its closed doors and covered windows, compared with the usual blaze of colour associated with business premises of the Eastern merchants. The morning fruit and vegetable market was also neglected by them with a few exceptions.

THE SELECT COMMITTEE

IN referring the Asiatic Bill to a Select Committee before the second reading instead of after as previously announced by the Minister of the Interior the Union Government have made by no means a small concession. Dr. Malan in replying the Congress deputation that waited upon him on the question some time ago emphatically refused to discuss the principle of the Bill but now an opportunity has been afforded to discuss the principle. Although this concession has been made we are not very hopeful as to the results of the Committee after knowing its personnel. With the exception of two or three members who are pro-Indians the rest are all anti-Indians. However, this is an opportunity given us to state our case fully and finally before the Government and then allowing them to take the course they may choose to and we on our part will be in a better position to take whatever action that may be deemed necessary. This concession however does not prevent us from demanding, as we have been, a Round Table Conference to discuss the whole Asiatic question, for the Asiatic question is not only involved in the Asiatic Bill. It is involved in all the Provinces where anti-Asiatic legislation already exists and the Asiatic Bill to a large extent only endorses the policy that has long been adopted by the Provinces. The Indian community will therefore not be satisfied until their request for a Round Table Conference is granted for that and that only can bring about a satisfactory

solution once and for all of the Asiatic question in South Africa.

Now with regard to the Select Committee that is already sitting the Indian community will have to seriously consider whether they will give evidence before it directly or not. Their objection to the Bill is against its principle and that they have more than on one occasion declared. Any discussion on details would be futile and not advisable. Therefore if they do give evidence they could only state once more that the Bill is wrong in principle and show how it is so. One thing, however, would be advisable should we decide to give evidence directly and that is to give it with complete unanimity. To give conflicting evidence on such vital a matter affecting commonly the whole Indian community will surely weaken our cause. We wish, therefore, to sound this note of warning in time for the consideration of all our brethren.

The Asiatic Bill

Dr. Malan's Statement In House of Assembly

Select Committee to Report Before April 1

Dr. MALAN (Minister of the Interior) made the following statement on the Asiatic question in the House of Assembly last week:—

As the House is aware, for a considerable time negotiations have taken place between the Government of India and the Government of the Union, in regard to the position of Indians in South Africa. These negotiations began shortly after I made a statement to the House last year, in which I intimated my intention of introducing an early date legislation dealing with the Indian question in South Africa. These negotiations have proceeded until a very recent date; they have now reached a definite stage, and I may almost say have reached a certain measure or finality, and I think it is only right at this stage that I should inform the House as to what the actual position is to-day.

Request for Round-Table Conference

The first and the chief object which the Government of India tried to achieve through these negotiations was the holding of a round table conference on the position of Indians in South Africa. Though the scope of that conference, as was suggested by the Government of India themselves, if it had been held, would have been restricted in a certain measure, yet, on the other hand, it is quite evident that the idea underlying this proposal was a discussion of the proposed legislation on the Indian question by this House, and especially the discussion of the Bill which I had intimated to the House that I was going to introduce—a discussion between the representatives of the Government of the Union and representatives of the Government of India.

The attitude which was adopted by us from the beginning in regard to this proposal—and to that attitude we have consistently stuck—was this, that this particular problem was a South African one, that it had to be solved by South Africa alone, and that it had to be solved with a view solely to the interests of South Africa.

Now we did not contend, and I think we would not have been justified in contending, that this attitude was inherently opposed to and, therefore, excluded any friendly conversations with an outside Government, but what we had in mind was that if

these conversations were to take place at all, then while we on our part would be expected to make concessions, and we would have been expected to make this concession, if such a conference were not to turn out a failure, on the other hand there must be held out prospectively a counter-balancing advantage to the Union of South Africa.

Principle of Reciprocity

If we were called upon to make only concessions and there was no counter-balancing, then these conversations would not take place on an equal footing, and the people of South Africa would have a right to interpret these conversations as an interference in our domestic affairs from outside, and as far as we could gauge the opinion of the people of South Africa we had a right to say to the Government of India that any interference from outside in our domestic affairs would be tolerated neither by the people of South Africa as a whole, nor by the bulk of the followers of any political party in the country.

For this reason and under these circumstances we intimated to the Government of India that we were not in principle opposed to the holding of a round-table conference.

But if we did hold one, then in the proposed discussions must be included this particular point, that the Government of India should be asked to be willing to co-operate with the Government of the Union to assist the Government in making the scheme of voluntary repatriation more effective than it is.

We more particularly thought of the possibility of holding out, with the assistance and co-operation of the Government of India, an additional inducement to the Indians to leave the country by holding out to them the possibility of an advantageous land settlement in India or adjacent territories. If the Government of India had agreed to include this particular point in the agenda of such a conference, the round-table conference as far as we were concerned would have been held.

India Disagrees

The Government of India, however, did not see their way to agree to the discussion of this particular point, and as a consequence we on our part did not see our way to agree to a conference with only prospective concessions on our part without any prospective advantage, a conference which would be interpreted under such circumstances by the people of South Africa as not being held on an equal footing between the two different sides, and as an intolerable interference from outside in our domestic affairs.

Failing a round-table conference, and with a view to making representations on our proposed legislation direct, the Government of India further approached us with the request to send a Commission or a so-called deputation to South Africa to inquire into the whole position of Indians here, and to give to their own Government first-hand information. We on our side had no difficulty in agreeing to this request, especially as the Government of India undertook that the men they were going to send would be men of discretion, who would not come to South Africa as agitators, and would not inflame by their presence here the mind of the Indian community, and make in that way the problem, which was already difficult, more difficult.

I am glad to say that the deputation has been in South Africa now for a considerable time, and the Government of the Union have so far no complaint whatever against them. On the contrary, the Government of the Union have every reason to be satisfied with the way in which they have acted in most difficult circumstances.

We went further in connection with this request, and we offered to the Government of India that after the deputation had collected its evidence they should

be allowed in the name of the Government of India and of the Indian community in South Africa to lay the opinions of Indians before the Select Committee which would be appointed by this House after the second reading of the Bill.

Another Request

After receiving the preliminary report of this deputation the Government of India approached us with the further request not to proceed, at this stage at least, any further with our proposed legislation, but to appoint as a preliminary measure a Commission similar to the Asiatic Commission which went into the whole question in 1921—to make a fresh inquiry and to report to this House. Unfortunately we were not in a position to agree to this request. We pointed out—and I think quite justly—to the Government of India that as a Commission had made exhaustive inquiries into the whole problem as late as 1921, the position since that time could not have materially changed, and that it was unnecessary under these circumstances to have a fresh inquiry. We further pointed out that such a fresh inquiry would mean delay and would mean at least this, that during the present session we would not be able to proceed with our proposed legislation; and we pointed out that in face of the impatience which existed in regard to the solution of this particular question we had no right to tell them that we would accede to their request.

Two Proposals Rejected

So far, then, we had turned down two very important requests on the part of the Government of India, and under these circumstances we realised that a feeling was springing up in India, and also among the Indian community in South Africa, that we were forcing through this most important legislation, in which they were so vitally concerned, not only against the will of the Indian community and the will of the Government of India, but without giving them any proper opportunity to lay the case of the Indians before the Government of the country and before this Legislature.

We felt that while this feeling lasted an atmosphere existed which was certainly not conducive to the successful solution of this most difficult and most important question. It was, therefore, felt necessary as far as possible to create an atmosphere of good will, an atmosphere which would be conducive to the successful solution of this question. Under these circumstances we thought that this feeling must as soon as possible be removed, and the only way to remove this feeling was to afford an opportunity for wider evidence, less restricted evidence, to be laid before the Committee to be appointed by this House.

Offer to India Accepted

Under these circumstances we definitely offered to the Government of India that we would propose to this House that the proposed legislation of which notice had been given should be referred to a Select Committee before the second reading. To this proposal we felt it was only right to attach certain conditions and safeguards. We felt it was necessary, because this was, under the circumstances prevailing in South Africa and in this House, an unusual procedure. It was unusual because the particular measure I introduced has certainly behind it to support it the volume of opinion in the country, and as far as I can judge there is no great division of opinion in this House with regard to this matter. To refer it to a Select Committee before the second reading we felt would be an unusual procedure.

The conditions which we thought it was necessary to attach to this offer were, in the first place, that the Government of India should intimate that they would be willing to make use of this special opportunity offered to them; the second condition was that if they thought it necessary to lay any evidence

before the Select Committee before the second reading such evidence should be brought forward by their deputation now in South Africa. Nobody else from India, either on their own behalf or on behalf of the Government of India, would be allowed to make use of this special opportunity. The third condition was that the Select Committee appointed before the second reading would be required by this House to report within such a period as to enable this House to pass this proposed legislation during the present session.

This offer, with the conditions, has been accepted by the Government of India.

Text of Telegrams

To enable the House to judge of the spirit in which this particular offer was made and accepted, I ask permission to read to the House (continued the Prime Minister) part of the correspondence which has taken place recently which have a more particular bearing on the points to which I have referred.

Telegram to India

On February 5 the following was despatched :

"While on the one hand my Ministers must regret their inability to accede to the request of the Government of India for a round table conference or a fresh inquiry, they, on the other hand, fully realise the anxiety of that Government to place as fully as possible the case of the Indian community in South Africa before the Government of the Union. It is for this reason that they previously adumbrated possibility of evidence before a Parliamentary Select Committee by the deputation from the Government of India, now in the country, after the Bill shall have passed the second reading. Although reference to a Select Committee after the second reading will imply the maintenance of the general principles of the Bill, it will at the same time offer a very wide scope for evidence, and will not even exclude evidence on such a fundamental question in which the Government of India is primarily concerned, as to whether the proposed segregation shall be voluntary or compulsory. To this suggestion which they have offered, my Ministers have thus far received no reply, and they are consequently in doubt as to the existence of any difficulty on the part of the Government of India in accepting the same. If such difficulties should however exist on the ground of too great a restriction of the evidence, which the deputation might desire to bring forward, my ministers would agree to propose the reference of the Bill to a Select Committee before the second reading, thus widening the scope for evidence so as to include the principles of the Bill. They wish it, however, to be understood that such a proposal on their part will be subject to the Government of India intimating their willingness to avail themselves of this opportunity, specially offered, to place evidence before the Select Committee, through their deputation, now in South Africa, and, further, that it will be subject to the Select Committee being required to report to Parliament within such limited period as will enable Parliament to deal finally during the present session with the legislation proposed."

Reply from India

To this offer the following reply was received from the Government of India:

"We are in receipt of your excellency's telegram dated February 5, and would be grateful if you would be so good as to convey to Your Excellency's Ministers our warm appreciation of the courtesy and consideration they have extended to us and to our deputation. While we cannot conceal from Your Excellency our deep disappointment that Your Excellency's Ministers have found it impossible to agree to either of the alternative methods put forward by us as best calculated to lead to a satisfactory solution of this problem we recognise that our proposals have been given the fullest and most anxious consideration. We further understand that the offer

now made to us involves a departure from normal Parliamentary practice and procedure, and we see in this another proof of the desire of Your Excellency's Ministers to find a solution of this difficult question. My Government are in the circumstances prepared to accept subject to the conditions stipulated in Your Excellency's telegram, and to our observation in the succeeding paragraphs the offer made by Your Excellency's Ministers of an inquiry by a Parliamentary Select Committee before the second reading of the Bill. We note with satisfaction that the terms of reference to the Committee will be sufficiently wide to include the consideration of the principles of the Bill, and we assume that it is the intention of Your Excellency's Ministers also to allow the representatives of Indian opinion in South Africa an opportunity of presenting their case to the Committee, which we feel sure Your Excellency's Ministers will agree could not fail materially to assist the Committee in its task. As the Union Government are aware, our objections to the Bill are fundamental, and are against the principles on which the Bill is based. We propose therefore to instruct our deputation to present the case before the Select Committee in respect of general principles, although it necessarily follows from our argument that we object also to the details of the Bill. We reckon that we realise that Your Excellency's Ministers are anxious to avoid unnecessary delay, but we trust in view of very grave consequences for the Indians which the proposed legislation must involve fullest possible opportunity compatible with limitations laid down in Your Excellency's telegram will be afforded for presentment of the Indian case. We are anxious that offer made by Your Excellency's Ministers and our reply thereto should be published here with least possible delay and should be glad know urgently by telegram when it is proposed to make these public in South Africa enable us to arrange for publication here.

Telegram from Union

To this telegram we briefly replied as follows:

"My Ministers note with great pleasure and appreciation the readiness of the Government of India to avail themselves of the opportunity offered to them for the presentment of the Indian case through their deputation now in South Africa in accordance with the contents of my telegram of the 4th February, 1926. With reference to the observations in paragraphs 2 and 3 of Your Excellency's agreement and for the further information of the Government of India, they desire to state that ample time will be given to the proposed Select Committee to hear and consider evidence and that the reference of the Bill to a Select Committee before the second reading implies that the Indian community in South Africa will, through their representatives, have the same opportunity and scope for presenting their case as will be accorded to the deputation from India. With reference to the last paragraph of your telegram I am informed by my Ministers that they propose to lay on the table of the House a copy of the correspondence between the Government of India and the Government of the Union with regard to the position of Indians in South Africa on Wednesday afternoon, the 17 inst. The hon. the Minister of the interior will then make a statement in the House and give notice that he will move the reference of the Bill to a Select Committee before the second reading. My Ministers submit that it will be suitable if the publication referred to in your telegram could take place in India at the same time."

Unopposed Motion

Dr. Malan then laid the correspondence on the table and moved as an unopposed motion that the order for the second reading of the Asiatic Bill be discharged, that the subject matter of the Bill be referred to a Select Committee for inquiry and report, the Committee to have power to take evidence and call for papers, and that it be an instruction to the Committee to bring up its report on or before Thursday, April 1,
The motion was agreed to.

Indians in Natal

The Real "Menace"

II.—"ARAB" TRADERS

(From a Natal Correspondent to the "Cape Times")

When the European extremists are confronted with the facts set forth in the previous article of this series they usually shift their ground and declare it is not so much the Coolie or the Indian manual labourer to whom they object as the so-called "Arab" or Indian trader. This class of Indian—with whom may be grouped the few Indians who practice professions—presents a problem wholly different from that offered by the "Coolie." He is of a different class, almost a different race. He has a certain amount of Aryan admixture in his blood and may display marked traces of Aryan ancestry in his features or his mentality. He is usually a Mahomedan whereas the Coolie class is predominantly Hindu. When he is prosperous at all events, he is clean in his person and clothes and the exterior of his house, whereas the Coolie is frequently filthy in his person, clothes and surroundings.

There are other points of contrast that do not tell in favour of the "Arab"—to retain an inaccurate but convenient term. One of the chief of these is that although he, rather than the Coolie, is keen to claim the privileges of South African citizenship, he does not think of himself as being of South African nationality. He is an Indian in exile. He looks at the relations of the races and all other questions with eyes of the political "intelligentsia" of India. On the other hand the intelligent of, or risen from, the Coolie class is developing a new outlook, primarily South African. He is not ashamed to call himself an Indian but he qualifies the term by putting South African in front of it. He is a South African Indian and claims South African nationality, whether he worries about South African citizen rights or not. He has never seen the land of his ancestors; possibly neither his father nor his grandfather before him ever saw it.

India to him is not a mother but a grand-mother to be honoured in memory not to be brought into everyday affairs. He retains the religion, and language, and many of the customs which his father or grandfather brought from India; even the "caste" system prevails among Natal Indians to an extent which Europeans rarely recognise. But politically he is a South African and his ambition is not to achieve equality with the European but to carve out a separate destiny for himself and his people as a separate community within the South African nation. He recognises that differences of race, religion, language and social customs separate him from the European on the one hand and the Native on the other. He may not like what Mr. Alexander would call the "ghetto" type of segregation, but he realises that the principle of segregation is mutually advantageous—that, for example, it has postponed and will continue to postpone, the enforcement of a standard of sanitation which he recognises as superior to his own but cannot at present afford. The controversy last year over the Durban municipal banquet to the Prince of Wales revealed that the Durban Indians of this type do not wish for "dinner-table equality."

Indians First

There is nothing of this spirit among trading and professional Indians. They are Indians first and South Africans—if at all—a long way after. It is they who provide all the monetary and other driving force in the agitation for all the "rights" enjoyed by Europeans. It is they who claim not only political equality but also "dinner-table equality." It is

they who are responsible for the visits of agitators from India who make demands which 95 per cent. of the Natal-born Indians would never dream of making in their own behalf. It is they, moreover, who invade the residential areas of Durban and Maritzburg and depreciate the value of their neighbour's property thus sending recruits by the dozen to the "Anti-Asiatic League" and similar bodies. If there were any real Indian nationality, they should be living among their own people—according to the standard determined by their wealth—and leading them socially in such matters as hygiene as well as politically. Actually they have a contempt for their humbler compatriots far more bitter than that which they credit their white neighbours with entertaining towards themselves.

It might be difficult to find concrete evidence of the presence of Indians of this class constituting a real nuisance to their white neighbours; but the fact remains that the purchase by Indians of a property on the Berea immediately produces a reduction in the value of adjoining properties. It is this class, too, which occasionally—very rarely—commits the offence, unforgivable in modern eyes, of mixing Indian with white blood.

The commercial morality of the Bombay trading Indian is not high; he figures rather prominently in the annals of insolvency. It is probably true also that his standard of living while he is struggling to get a footing is deplorably low; that he lives on the proverbial "smell of an oil rag." He is not very scrupulous in observance of the laws relating to hygiene, shop hours, minimum wages and some other points.

But in none of these things is he alone. Similar statements have been made regarding other elements of South Africa's population against which there is no organised outcry. The remedy in most cases is a stricter enforcement of the law. It is not denied that the Indian in trade gives good service. His main offence is that he cuts out the European from certain classes of trade; but if he were expelled from the country, as the extremists desire, would the Europeans who would supplant him be much more scrupulous?

Economic and Social Position

Economically the trading Indian is a "menace" only to a section of the European trading community; the palatial new shops that are being built or have recently been built in West Street, Durban for purely European firms offer a striking demonstration of the limitations of his competition. The case appears to be different in some of the small towns such as Stanger and Verulam; but there in the main the Indian is catering for his own race. Particular cases where an Indian has cut out European storekeepers bulk large in population discussion; but surely the argument from individual cases is the worst possible guide in matters concerning the relations of races.

The supposed social "menace" arising from the presence of the Indian in Natal is the subject of even greater exaggeration. It is quite possible to live in Durban for years without encountering a single instance of the alleged arrogance of the prosperous "Arab." It would be difficult to get one per cent. of the European population of Durban to testify to specific instances of detriment, inconvenience or even annoyance caused by Indians; and in a very large proportion of the cases alleged it would be found on examination that the root of the trouble was mere prejudice. It is annoying to see an Indian seated on a tramcar while you yourself have to stand, whereas if he were a European it would be merely his good luck in having boarded the car first; but the real source of the annoyance is clearly race-prejudice.

If the facts are even approximately as they have been stated in these two articles, is it worth while

to clamour for, or even to contemplate, drastic measures which must invariably create grave difficulties for the Imperial Government and for the British "Raj" in India and lay up for South Africa among all the peoples of the East a store of hatred and suspicion which centuries may not dissipate?

Nevertheless, it is a sound instinct in the people of Natal which demands that every justifiable measure should be taken to diminish the evil effects of the unfortunate tripartite complication of races which exists in that province; and that instinct is shared by many who do not entertain the violent prejudices or endorse the extravagant demands of the South African League extremists.

(To be Concluded.)

Anti-Asiatics Busy In Transvaal Southern Suburbs Association

At the monthly meeting of the Southern Suburbs European Association recently the question of the opposition to the granting to Asiatics of general dealers' licences in the district was discussed says the *Star* (Johannesburg.) The association had made in all 13 objections to the Town Council, and the licence of an Indian storekeeper in Tarf Club Street had as a result not been granted.

Mr. H. J. Crocker said that in the future the association would have to lodge more specific objections. The failure of objections in the past had been due to vagueness.

He pointed out that after the General Dealers Ordinance had come into force, the Town Council had found it an impossible task to deal effectively with the 10,000 applicants for licences. The Council had been taken by surprise and had found itself without means of coping with applications.

Letters had been received in reply to circulars sent out to various towns in the Union, in which it was stated that two towns had definitely decided to form Anti-Asiatic Leagues, while the other towns were considering the matter.

Mr. H. M. Ross, the chairman, said that the association had been making steady progress since its inception three years ago.

Middelburg Town Council

Middelburg (Transvaal) Town Council, in an endeavour to strengthen the hands of the Government in connection with the Asiatic Bill is reported to have adopted the following resolutions drafted by a committee:

Whereas in the investigation into town conditions in connection with the renewal or granting of licences the Municipal Council of Middelburg have had the following facts urgently brought to their notice.

(1) Unsatisfactory hygienic conditions and Asiatic trading are practically synonymous.

(2) So many small Asiatic traders contrive to exist that the standard of the general trader as to life and comfort must be lowered, and prices of commodities also raised.

(3) After years of sojourn the Asiatic seems no more assimilable into European culture than at first.

This Council begs to assure the Government of sincere and thorough support in any attempt to deal with this most important Union problem—the Asiatic in the midst of us. This is a unanimous resolution.

"The Committee further recommended, that any resolution adopted by the Council on the above lines be submitted to the Government and also to the Transvaal Municipal Association with the request that the Association will circularise other Municipalities requesting them to take similar resolutions for submission to the Government. The Associa-

tion be also asked to make representations to the Government on the above lines."

This second resolution was also adopted by the Town Council.

Class Areas Bill Not Drastic Enough

A public meeting called by the Mayor of Klerksdorp was held recently to discuss the Class Areas Bill. There was an attendance of between 400 and 500 persons. The Mayor having introduced the subject, the Rev. P. A. Theron spoke of the Indian question mainly from a Christian point of view as opposed to Mohammedanism. Mr. H. L. M. Leibbrand, M.P.C., Mr. J. A. Naser, J.P., and Mr. H. M. Guest, J.P., also Mr. Morgan Evans and several others addressed the meeting and eventually the following resolution was passed without a single dissentient proposed by Mr. Morgan Evans and seconded by Mr. Leibbrandt, M.P.C.: "That this meeting of Klerksdorp residents thanks the Minister of the Interior for his efforts to combat the Asiatic menace, and requests him to introduce legislation effecting the ultimate removal of all Asiatics from white areas, that all Asiatics not born in this country should be repatriated at the earliest date, and even those born in South Africa should be assisted to be sent away if they choose to go. This meeting is of opinion that the Class Areas Bill as drafted is not sufficiently drastic."

The meeting was absolutely non-political—South African and Nationalist party men all agreeing.—*The Star*.

Johannesburg Municipal Licensing Court States its Position

Certificates to enable them to trade as general dealers were granted by the Johannesburg Municipal Licensing Court to a number of Indians, but the applications of other Asiatics who had failed to appear in support of them were struck out.

At the opening of the court says the *Star* (Johannesburg) Councillor Law Palmer (who presided) referred to the suggestion made in the Press and elsewhere that members of Municipal Licensing Courts bore animus to Asiatic traders.

"I want to state," said the chairman, "that, as far as this court is concerned, it has dealt with, and will continue to deal with, every application on its merits. It has endeavoured, and it will continue to do so, to deal justly with every applicant for a trading licence. Neither politics nor race will influence us one iota, and whether Asiatic, Jew, Gentile or native, justice will be administered without fear or favour. This court endeavours to carry out the terms of the Act, and if in doing so certificates are refused it will be because either applicants or their premises for which licences are required do not conform with the health or building by-laws. The public has a right to protection from insanitary or unhealthy premises being used for the sale of articles of food, and this court must provide that protection."

Personnel of Select Committee

The Select Committee on the Asiatic Bill was announced by the Speaker in the House of Assembly as follows:—

The Minister of the Interior (Dr. Malan), Messrs. M. Alexander, K.C., C. W. Coulter, P. Duncan, K.C., Fordham, Hattingh, Lennox, M. L. Malan, Marwick, Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, Messrs. Pearce, Reyburn, Rood, Van Hees and Vermooten. The party representation is as follows: Nationalists, six; S.A.P.; five; Labour, three; Con. Dem., one.

India and South Africa

"All Asia Stands Together"

Position of China and Japan

(BY C. F. ANDREWS IN THE "CAPE ARGUS.")

South Africa, so far as its present western civilisation is concerned, is for the most part a young and undeveloped country. While the actual discovery of the Cape by the first adventurous voyagers from Europe dates back to the fifteenth century, its history as a progressive civilisation is hardly yet a century old.

On the surface the new civilisation of the West appears everywhere to prevail. Those from Europe who visit for the first time its admirably planned cities and survey its country-side, might regard the present order as already established. Yet those who have studied most carefully and deeply the underlying conditions are full of misgivings. South African statesmen like General Smuts and writers like Mr. L. E. Neame have not failed to express their doubts about the future.

One of the most pessimistic utterances was that made, soon after the census, by Dr. Inge, the Dean of St. Paul's and president of the Eugenist Society, in London. The passage appears in his Galton lecture, and it has been republished in the first volume of "Outspoken Essays."

Dr. Inge's Belief

Dr. Inge believes that over a great part of South Africa the white race is already facing defeat. With its complete monopoly of political power, its intense class consciousness, and its unwillingness to undertake manual work, he likens it to those ancient oligarchies which lived upon the labour of serfs.

It is true that in such a picture the Dean has missed the significance of the Cape franchise and the liberal element that is everywhere at work beneath the surface of things. But taking the logical view of the doom of any aristocracy, he looks upon the future as already decided.

"I know," he writes, "of no instance in history, in which a ruling race has not been ultimately ousted or absorbed by its subjects. It is a law, which hardly admits of exceptions, that aristocracies do not maintain their numbers. The ruling race rules itself out."

Dr. Inge goes on to show how the race that is treated as inferior tends inevitably to become prolific in population, while the race that reckoned upon its own superiority tends, as a leisured class, to become sterile. Thus, the centre of gravity shifts more and more in favour of the survival of the race that is kept in an inferior and subject position, while the aristocratic race that holds it in subjection gradually disappears.

"Dame Nature," the Dean writes, with a certain irony in his tone, "cares nothing for the babble of politicians and trade union regulations. She says to us, what Plotinus in a remarkable passage makes her to say: 'You should not ask questions: You should try to understand: I am not in the habit of talking!'"

In Nature's School

"In Nature's school," he goes on, "it is a word and a blow, and the blow first. To the Eugenist the prospect of the English race in South Africa is very dubious. The white man is there as an aristocrat, directing semi-servile labour. . . . Large tracts of country may at last be occupied only by Kaffirs."

It is not difficult to counter certain postulates in

this argument. We might answer, that history does not always repeat itself; that we are making new history ourselves every day. Dame Nature does not have it all her own way. She cannot be the same domineering mistress that she was, before the full advent of scientifically controlled mechanical power.

Granting, however, that there are artificial means of almost incalculable potency, whereby Nature herself may be harnessed, yet it is true also that rigid conditions still remain within which Nature still rules as her own mistress with absolute sway; and it is as useless to defy Nature in these things as it was futile for King Canute to defy the incoming tides of the ocean. Therefore, the fact remains, that South Africa represents a very young civilisation, with problems of such difficulty within its own borders, that some people are already inclined to call them insoluble.

The thesis that I now wish to present may be stated in the following words: "Is it wise for this young civilisation, at the very time when the roots of its own culture are not yet firmly established, to challenge gratuitously all the three ancient civilisations of the East?"

"We must get rid," it will be said in reply, "once and for all, of the Asiatic question before we turn our face to the larger native problem. We can settle the Indian problem quickly by grasping the nettle with both hands, just as we settled the Chinese problem twenty years ago. After all, with us to-day, it is a matter of self-preservation. We really cannot consider the right and wrong of it. If what we do in self-defence insults India, China and Japan, we cannot help it."

When the matter is thus stated, as an argument, it is common ground that the Indian question has got to be solved somehow. It is also common ground, that this minor question of the Indian in South Africa ought not to interfere with the right solution of the major issue in South Africa—the native question. But will the short cut contemplated lead to a solution? Is it not likely only to make the whole problem more difficult?

Let it not be said carelessly that the civilisations of Asia are effete and that their resentment is not to be feared. India is far too close geographically to South Africa for any such facile argument. A people, on the verge of obtaining self-government, that numbers over three hundred and twenty millions, is not to be despised. Furthermore, in this matter, all Asia stands together; and though China may not be at present a factor to reckon with, yet in the end she will count for a very great deal, with her four hundred and seventy million souls. And Japan? Is Japan to be lightly treated?

We have been learning recently, through the unspeakable miseries of the war, the intense folly and madness of throwing down the gauntlet and taking the short cut to power regardless of justice and right. We have learnt also entirely to distrust the plea of self-preservation when it over-rides moral considerations. The best minds in the world at the present time have acknowledged that a vast and reckless mistake was made by all the warrior nations in August, 1914. We can see now that this madness of unnecessary war has thrown back Western civilisation and impoverished the whole of Europe in intellect as well as in wealth. The analogy between what happened then in Europe and the passing of an anti-Asiatic measure in South Africa by the use of despotic force may seem a far-fetched one in South Africa itself, but I can assure those who read these articles, that it is being used with intense sincerity of conviction in India. The sense is everywhere present that a moral wrong is being done, which can never be forgotten or forgiven.

OUR LONDON LETTER
 [FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT]
 21st January, 1926.

The British Parliament meets on Friday week. It will have to face many far reaching questions. The chief among them will be the question of national economy. In the past whiles the Government declared for economy in the State, departmental heads gave lip service and no more: each opposed any reduction of expenditure in his own department and expected a reduction in the other departments, and so the story goes. The Chancellor of Exchequer, the versatile Mr. Winston Churchill, will in the coming session seek express Parliamentary authority to reduce the expenditure in each of the several state departments.

After the lapse of some centuries, the Moots in the Inns of Court are being revived with a view further to improving the legal education of young barristers and students. Gray's Inn alone appears to have kept up its Moots. Last Monday the Moot in the Inner Temple was revived with the Lord Chancellor presiding. Next Tuesday the Moot in Lincoln's Inn will also be revived under the chairmanship of the Lord Chancellor. Middle Temple will too be not without its Moot. There are societies indirectly connected with, or independent of the Inns of Court which are interested in matters of Law. But there is something peculiarly appropriate in an Inn having its own Moot. They can never be thought without in some way remembering their early and very ancient traditions which are not inseparable from the life and atmosphere of the Inns of Court which in tradition and age are as great if not greater than those associated with the venerable Universities of Cambridge and Oxford. In the Lincoln's Inn Black Books the Moot is mentioned so far back as 1428. These Moots however, where they had lapsed for a time now with their revival will give an added interest to those inquest of legal education, and will to some extent help to show them how

things in law are done, and this under some semblance of a Court of Justice.

Mahatma Gandhi is now engaged in the writing of his biography. He has reached the chapter dealing with his early marriage at the age of fourteen, and as a "votary of the truth" he says he must go on writing this chapter however bitter it may be for he disapproves and deplores early marriages between those who are no more than children. There is that well-known and charming little life of his written by the late Rev. Mr. Doke styled *An Indian Patriot M. K. Gandhi*. That is an account of his life which Mr. Doke largely drew from Mr. Gandhi himself in the days of the passive resistance movement in the Transvaal. But we shall when the Mahatma's book is published have a larger, a fuller and a more comprehensive life account of a man among men told by himself, as he alone could, unsparingly of himself and of the truth that is in him. We have no doubt that the book will be as lovable as the Mahatma himself. It is an encouraging sign of the times that the lives of our great men are now being made accessible to our children and even to ourselves. Following upon the death of Sir Surendranath Bannerjee, his auto biography saw the light of day. The life story of a great Indian Pioneer, and we are now promised the auto biography of another great Indian Pioneer, as great a Patriot as Sir Bannerjee—our own—Mahatma. We have had the biography of that great Indian Administrator and man of letters, Romesh Chandra Dutt by his son-in-law, a very readable and interesting book. These are the beginnings, if we may so phrase it of the re-birth of the greatness of our Nation. The recognition of the great and noble among us.

The gold mining industry shipped 750,000 worth of gold to India last week. This shipment ends a period of two months, during which there has been a scarcity of buying orders for gold from India. India, it is claimed, to be still the Union's best customer in the matter of purchases of gold.

હામારી બુની અને બહુતી બચ્ચા
 બચ્ચા અને નામ ફરફાર કરી હાલમાં. કેપીટન બાલકની હોટલ. એ અને વિક્ટોરીઆ સ્ટ્રીટના પુણા પર

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ધી શિયાલ રેસ્ટોરન્ટ એ સ્ટ્રીટ
 આવેલી છે.

તમામ હિન્દુ મુસલમાન કોમની સગવડ
 બહારથી આવનાર તેમજ બનારાઓ આમળથી પુણા
 આપણે તે સ્ટેશન તેમજ સ્ટીમર પર હાલુ રહી બેઠતી
 સગવડો કરી આપીયું

દેશથી આવનાર તેમજ બનારા પેશીબટાને રહેવા માથા
 ખાવા પીવાની ઉત્તમ સગવડ.

આથી સારી સગવડ ક્યાં બેળવશે?
 કેપીટન બાલકની હોટલમાં
 માલીક કે હવણ.

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